

Flint & Walling

Founded: 1866

Location: 95 North Oak Street, Kendallville (1866– )

Simeon Flint and David C. Walling began their friendship in Norwalk, Ohio.

Flint, originally from Quebec, left home at the age of thirteen and immigrated to Lowell, Massachusetts, where he became a lathe operator before joining the navy. After his stint as a sailor, Flint became a machinist, traveling first to Chicago and then Norwalk, where he met Walling. Walling was born in New York State and there learned the machinist's trade before moving to Norwalk. In 1866 both men moved to Kendallville and purchased an interest in the machine and metalworking business of William Hildreth. The Hildreth, Flint, & Walling Manufacturing Company, located on the corner of Mitchell and Oak Streets, was based upon the foundry Hildreth had established in 1854 in partnership with Henry McComiskey. Under Flint and Walling's influence, the firm increased its production of agricultural implements.

The Hildreth, Flint, & Walling Manufacturing Company began to expand rapidly after Hildreth sold his interest to Henry I. Park in the spring of 1872. Park's father, Wesley Park, was one of the founders of Auburn in De Kalb County, and Park, together with his father and brother Amos B. Park, had been involved in provisioning the Union army during the Civil War. From 1865 to 1872 Henry and Amos ran a hardware business. After investing in the newly renamed Flint, Walling, & Company in 1872, Park took charge of sales and collections, while Flint supervised manufacturing and Walling

oversaw the pattern department. In 1874 the three partners expanded the company's plant and began to manufacture water pumps and windmills.

The production of windmills proved to be a boon for Flint, Walling, & Company. In the late 1800s windmills were in great demand on the western plains among farmers in need of irrigation equipment. In 1878 the firm patented the Star Windmill, its most successful product. The simple, compact, yet powerful windmill, which was designed by Walling, went through numerous model changes over the years and was marketed throughout the world. American GIs were startled to find the Hoosier-made windmill in northern Africa during World War II. Flint developed improvements for the windmill, while Walling perfected single-acting, double-acting, and three-way force pumps. The Star Windmill was equipped with a "governor"; when the wind became strong, the rudder was thrown out of line, creating a tendency to move the wheel around so as to face the wind at an angle. At the height of the windmill era, there were more than thirty manufacturers of windmills within a fifty-mile radius of Kendallville.

The Star Windmill won prizes at exhibitions around the country. By 1883 the firm was adding new machinery almost daily and building a new mill. In 1884 local railroad employees complained of overwork as they attempted to keep up with the shipping demands for the Star Windmill. In January of that year Flint, Walling, & Company dissolved by mutual consent of its partners and was reconstituted as the Flint & Walling Manufacturing Company by Flint, Walling, Park, and Rufus G. Marcy. They recapitalized the company at \$90,000. In 1886, with business again expanding rapidly, the firm was incorporated, and Walling became president. The plant expanded in 1879 and 1889. In 1891 the Flint & Walling Manufacturing Company produced 15,688 pumps

and windmills, employed an average of 164 workers, and maintained a staff of 10 traveling salesmen. In addition, the company was expanding into overseas markets. In 1892 Russia placed a large number of orders for windmills. By 1902 the company, which was marketing water tanks, steel towers and tank supports, and a variety of pumps in addition to windmills, employed about 400 workers on a typical day (more in peak periods) in five large buildings, including a foundry, galvanizing department, woodshop, general manufacturing plant, and warehouse.

Flint died in 1894, and Walling retired as president of the firm in 1906 due to ill health. He was succeeded as president by Henry Park, who held the post until his death in 1916. Park's brother, Frank, later served as secretary of the firm, and Frank's two sons, Amos Edmond and Henry Todd, both later served as president of the company. Throughout the Great Depression, Flint & Walling Manufacturing Company was only able to maintain its entire payroll by reducing the workload to one day a week. During World War II the company converted to war production and manufactured pumps, 20 mm tracer shells, and fuel cell casings and rubber patterns for the military. By the 1930s and 1940s electric water pumps began to supersede windmills in popularity as more and more rural areas received electricity. In response, Flint & Walling pioneered the development of convertible jet pumps, centrifugal pumps, and sump pumps. In the 1950s the company began to manufacture submersible pumps.

Richard R. Cole, head of the Kendallville Foundry Company, gained control of Flint & Walling Manufacturing Company in 1950. In 1954 the two companies formally merged. In the same year the company discontinued the production of Star Windmills. By 1964 Flint & Walling Manufacturing Company employed 525 people and exported its

products to 44 countries. In the 1960s the company began to diversify, becoming Flint & Walling, Inc., in 1969 and gradually acquiring several subsidiaries, including Paramount Industries, Inc., a paper tubing manufacturer in Fort Wayne; Utah-American Corporation, manufacturers of high quality speakers and audio systems with offices in Huntington; and Parker Industries, Inc., makers of solid waste and refuse containers, wagon gears, and gravity beds for hauling grain, which had plants in Silver Lake and in Iowa. The philanthropically minded Cole, who had been known to quietly pay the hospital bills and college tuitions of those less privileged, died in 1965, leaving his holdings to the Olive B. Cole Foundation (named for his mother). The Internal Revenue Service ordered the nonprofit Cole Foundation to divest itself of its holdings in profit-making organizations, however, and in 1971 the Masco Corporation purchased 30 percent of the foundation's stock. In 1978 the Masco Corporation acquired a controlling interest in Flint & Walling and, in 1985, purchased all outstanding stock.

After the purchase Flint & Walling continued to produce over nine hundred different models of pumps, which were sold throughout the world, in addition to expanding into other aspects of the water services industry, including the manufacture of water softening and conditioning equipment. In 1999 Flint & Walling remained a division of the Masco Corporation of Taylor, Michigan, employed 150, and expected sales in the fiscal year to exceed \$25 million. Max Limpert served as the firm's president.